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SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY LECTURES RESUME AFTER DEADLY STRIKE

REF: A. MASERU 382 B. MASERU 378

¶1. Lectures at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) resumed on November 2, almost two weeks after the deadly strike, after the Acting Vice Chancellor addressed students (reflets). Foreign students are reported to have returned to campus on Saturday, October 30. The University Senate established a Commission of Inquiry composed of the University Administration members and representatives of the Students Union, to investigate the root causes of the strike that resulted in the death of a female student who was shot by police. Mats'eliso Thulo, the daughter of the Commissioner of Lesotho Correctional Service Mojalefa Thulo, died as a result of pellets which were lodged in her heart. Autopsy results confirmed this cause of death, contrary to the initial statement by police indicating that she had died as a result of a stampede that ensued when the police arrived to disperse the student protest.

¶2. University contacts also revealed that the Students Union wants the service contract of Security Lesotho Company to be terminated with immediate effect. They accused Security Lesotho guards who are responsible for campus security, of also taking part in assaulting them during the clashes with the police. The students are reported to have demanded that disciplinary action should be taken against the Police Officer who shot and killed Mats'eliso Thulo.

¶3. On October 29, RSO met with Commissioner of Prisons of Maseru, Mr. Mojalefa Thulo, to deliver a condolence letter from Ambassador Rob Nolan. Thulo showed RSO a copy of the official autopsy, which stated that seven pellets were recovered from Mats'eliso Thulo's body; witnesses told him that his daughter was not a part of the students who were rioting. She had apparently left her room in order to walk to the store and purchase food, when the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) arrived on campus and fired warning shots into the air in an attempt to disperse those students that were rioting. Witnesses also told Commissioner Thulo that when the police fired their weapons, students started to panic and immediately turned and ran in the opposite direction. Police then started indiscriminately firing at random students, and the Commissioner's daughter was struck by pellets and died at the scene. Her funeral will be held on November 7, 2009.

¶4. The fatal shooting at the University has drawn widespread condemnation from various sectors including the media houses, opposition parties, civil society organizations, and private citizens. The police have been accused of being 'trigger happy' and lacking in professionalism. It is too early to gauge the next course of action by the students regarding the police and their animosity towards campus Security. The University administration has assured the students that all the issues they have raised will all be addressed.

NOLAN